

April 14, 1956

Dear Dr. Huxley:

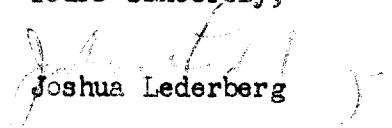
Thank you for your note of the 11th.

Our summer plans are not altogether definite. We have tentative commitments to be at Baltimore June 18-22 and Ann Arbor July 9-13. If we can possibly manage it, we hope to get to Woods Hole for the rest of July and perhaps a week in August. If so, we shall look forward to seeing you there. Otherwise, as far as we know ~~know~~, we expect to be at home. So if we miss you at Woods Hole, I hope to see you here. Most of my colleagues are likely to be here too in early September.

(or at least objective) What do you think of the deterioration of terminology that has been setting in for such respectable terms as "locus" and "allele". I have been disturbed and astonished to read my esteemed colleagues' reports on crossing-over within loci and seriation of alleles, and ~~know~~ Demerec is proposing that a locus be a functional unit, and the term site for the recombinational unit. This wouldn't be so bad if one really could judge what the functional unit was; at least we do have a relatively unambiguous test for the recombinational unit. There is something of a question of linguistic history here -- wasn't "allelomorphic" conceived as expressing the mutual exclusion of alternatives from a gamete, i.e., the absence of recombination between them. If this goes on, we will probably have to drop these terms altogether! You are something of a neologist yourself, and I have to congratulate the technique of concise formation that led, e.g., to "morph", so I suspect you share my concern for precision in meaning. What we lack is a respectable dictionary in biology, authoritative and comprehensive enough that we would use it as extensively in technical writing as we do the standard dictionaries. The existing versions are either hopelessly out-of-date or not technical enough. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ A good dictionary would be tremendously valuable not only to stabilize the notation for general concepts like gene and allele, but even more so for run-of-the-mill reference, so that bacteriologists and zoologists could still talk to one another.

I have been making small noises in favor of such a venture, but without much response here. In fact, it really has to be done in England, because I don't think you will find enough educated people here who would be interested in it. Can you see any hope for it?

Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg